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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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TAGS: KWBG PHUM PREL PTER ASEC CASC GZ IS

SUBJECT: WB/G SITERP: PA-HAMAS CLASH IN GAZA AS MORTAR/ROCKET ATTACKS CONTINUE AT A LOWER LEVEL; IDF KILLS TWO AND ARRESTS SEVEN IN THE WEST BANK -- JULY 19, 2005 (1600 HOURS)

¶1. (U) This is a joint ConGen Jerusalem/Embassy Tel Aviv cable.

¶2. (SBU) Summary: Up to twelve Palestinians were injured in an extended PA-Hamas clash in the Gaza Strip on July 19. One Palestinian was reported dead due to IDF warning fire when a car tried to force its way through a closed Israel checkpoint near the Katif junction. Mortar and rocket fire continued in Gaza, albeit at a lower level than on the weekend, injuring one Israeli, two foreign workers, and two Palestinians. Israeli police and military units continued to block anti-disengagement demonstrators from entering the Gaza Strip. IDF soldiers on July 19 shot and killed two Palestinian brothers, reportedly members from either the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) or the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, near Nablus. IDF soldiers continued to conduct operations in Tulkarm and entered Qalqilya, Nablus, and Bethlehem and arrested seven Palestinians. End summary.

Gaza

¶3. (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Deaths/Shootings: According to the IDF, soldiers fired warning shots near the Katif junction on July 18. UNRWA reported that a 14-year-old Palestinian was killed in the incident when a group of Palestinians tried to drive through a closed IDF checkpoint.

-- Injuries/Shootings/Rocket: UNRWA reported that on July 19 PA security forces attempted to arrest a Hamas leader in Jabalia, leading to a firefight between Jabalia and Beit Lahia and involving a PA APC. Hamas militants -- using either a homemade rocket or two RPGs -- destroyed several PA cars in Beit Lahia and allegedly took as hostages (and later released) three PA officers. UNRWA said that fighting continued around the Al Awda hospital when PA security forces followed wounded Hamas militants there. Hamas then attacked two PA security officials as they returned home from the operation in Gaza City. In total, twelve injuries were reported. According to the Israeli press, five PA officials and two Hamas militants were injured. The press also said that al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade militants assisted the PA forces when they were exchanging fire with Hamas.

-- Injuries/Shooting: UNRWA reported that three cars of armed and masked gunmen attacked the Arab Center for Studies and Research on Nasser Street in Gaza on July 19, resulting in nine injuries.

-- Injuries/Mortars: The IDF reported that two foreign workers were lightly injured in mortar attacks. One was hit when two shells landed in Gadic on July 18 and one was hit when one shell landed in Ganei Tal on July 19.

-- Injuries/Explosion: UNRWA reported that two Palestinians were injured on July 18 when the mortar shell they were preparing to launch exploded prematurely.

-- Injuries/Rockets: UNRWA said that the Israeli press claimed one civilian was injured when four rockets detonated in Atzmona.

-- Rockets: In addition to the attack noted in "Injuries/Rockets" above, UNRWA said one homemade rocket was fired overnight from Beit Lahia at Israel.

-- Anti-tank Missiles: The IDF reported two anti-tank missiles fired at an IDF outpost north of Khan Yunis, one on July 18 and one on July 19.

-- Mortars: In addition to the three shells listed above in "Injuries/Mortars," the IDF reported 14 additional mortar shells fired at eleven targets. On July 18, Palestinians fired one shell at IDF soldiers near Nahal Oz crossing, one

at civilians east of Dugit, one at civilians in Ganei Tal, five at the IDF and one at civilians in Neve Dekalim, as well as two at the IDF and one at civilians in Gaddid. On July 19 the Palestinians fired two shells at an IDF outpost north of Rafah. UNRWA reported at least 18 mortar attacks in addition to the shelling listed above in "Injuries/Mortars:" five at Rafah Yam, five at Neve Dekalim, one at Ganei Tal, one at Gaddid, four at the IDF camp on the Egyptian border opposite Zurub, five at Morag, six at Atzmona, and two at Kfar Darom.

-- Explosive Devices: The IDF reported that two explosive devices were found and disarmed by Palestinians police on July 18 near the Netzarim junction.

-- Shootings: The IDF reported two shooting incidents in addition to the one noted above in "Death/Shooting." On July 19, IDF soldiers were targeted by shooters south of Rafah and near Kfar Darom (confirmed by UNRWA). UNRWA reported an exchange of gunfire between the IDF and Palestinians near Neve Dekalim, as well as IDF shooting at mortar launching sites in near Gaddid and Al Amal (Khan Yunis) on July 19, and at a rocket-launching site near Atzmona on July 18.

14. (SBU) ARRESTS: none reported.

15. (SBU) BORDER CROSSINGS/INTERNAL CHECKPOINTS:

-- UNRWA and Israeli Radio reported that the IDF lifted the internal trisection of the Gaza Strip.

-- No Palestinians except those holding Jerusalem ID cards are currently allowed to use the Erez crossing. The crossing is open for international travelers.

-- The Erez Industrial Zone was closed.

-- The Karni terminal was partially open.

-- Rafah Terminal was open on July 18 in both directions, but closed to Palestinian males between the ages of 16 and 35.

-- Nahil Oz was operating on July 18.

-- The Abu Houli-Gush Katif Road was re-opened July 19.

-- Netzarim Junction at Salahadeen Road was closed.

-- The Netzarim Coastal Road was reopened July 19.

-- Salahadeen Road was open at Sufa/Morag.

-- Sufa Crossing was closed for Palestinian laborers but open for construction materials.

-- The Toufah checkpoint was open in both directions, except for males between 16 and 30.

-- The Abu Al-Ajeen bypass road was closed.

16. (SBU) Political Developments:

-- The UN cautioned their staff that the ongoing PA-Hamas confrontations could escalate.

-- Israeli media reported that Hamas told Egyptian officials that they are committed to the "tahdiya" or calm.

-- According to Israeli press, Defense Minister Mofaz has ordered security forces to prevent anti-disengagement demonstrators from reaching the Kissufim Road. Large police and military units remain deployed in the area to prevent the demonstrators from entering Gaza.

-- Mofaz told reporters that the IDF is prepared to carry out large-scale ground operations in Gaza if attacks continue. He noted, however, that international and Israeli pressure had led to a marked decrease in attacks over the past 24 hours.

-- The IDF is maintaining a general closure of the Gaza Strip.

West Bank

17. (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Deaths: IDF soldiers on July 19 shot and killed two Palestinian brothers, reportedly members from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), during an operation in al-Yamun village, northwest of Jenin. According to Israeli sources, IDF soldiers shot the two brothers during an exchange of gunfire, after Israeli bulldozers demolished the house where the two brothers had hidden. Palestinian sources in the PA Ministry of Interior, however, claimed that the two brothers were members of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades.

-- Shooting/Injury: IDF soldiers on July 18 shot and wounded a Palestinian in the leg at a checkpoint near Nablus. According to Palestinian sources, the IDF soldiers shot the Palestinian to prevent him from passing through the checkpoint.

-- Stabbing/Injury: A Palestinian teenager the evening of July 18 stabbed an Israeli in the leg near UN Headquarters in Jerusalem. Israeli police are searching for the suspect, who fled into an East Jerusalem neighborhood after the incident. Israeli police suspect criminal motives for the attack.

18. (SBU) ARRESTS/SECURITY:

-- Incursion/Arrests: According to Israeli sources, IDF soldiers entered Qalqilya, Nablus, and Bethlehem on July 18 and arrested seven Palestinians.

-- Security: The IDF has continued to conduct operations in Tulkarm following the July 12 suicide bombing in Netanya.

19. (SBU) DEMOLITIONS:

-- Israeli bulldozers on July 18 uprooted trees and leveled Palestinian lands in Shufa village, east of Tulkarm.

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